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TO
GAFFER GOOCH.
*On the Blessings of "Agricultural
" Distress."*

Kensington, 3, April, 1821.

DEAR GAFFER,

THE Holy Alliance, backed, doubtless, by their old and constant *invisible* friend, and having with them the underworkings of the Old Bourbons and of some others that shall (for reasons too evident to be stated) be nameless here, have, it seems, triumphed over the Neapolitans, who have, without doubt, been sold by those whom they were so stupid as not to treat *a la Francoise*; but, GAFFER, the Holy Alliance have not triumphed over our, and the world's, best friend, the DEBT! The case of the "Lords of the Soil" and of the Boroughs is in *your hands*. Is it not a *difficult* case? I told you that it would be difficult. Is it not here an affair of women and boys hallooing at a market-place for *cheap corn*. It is an affair of "public creditors;" an affair of "good faith." Come, come, my good lords of the soil, let us have no shuffling. You

borrowed the money: pay it like honest men; or, *surrender your all*. That is the law; and, since you have abused those, or, rather, him, who would have had you "*break faith*," he will now endeavour to induce you to keep faith; to keep that faith, for having advised you to break which you have so unmercifully abused him.

I mean to speak to you, GAFFER, in the present letter, of the Blessings of "Agricultural Distress;" of the *probable result* of the Proceedings of your Committee; and of the final effects as to the "Lords of the Soil." But, first of all, let me say a word or two about the *constitution of the Committee* and about the *nature of its proceedings*.

The Committee consists of persons selected by a majority of the House; and the Ministers have on their side such majority. However, the members of the Committee are also members of the House. The House is, as Mr. PERRY has it, "*the Grand Council of the Nation*;" and, as the Committee is *selected*, the Committee must be something of

A

essence excessively "*Grand*." Therefore, if this Committee fail to produce a remedy for the complained-of evil, to whom, or to what, shall we look? How desperate will be our case! If, indeed, the Holy Alliance could afford any assistance, we might live in hope; but, the malady is of a kind to set the Holy Alliance at defiance; and even the Old Ally of that alliance.

The *nature of the proceedings* of this Committee is a matter full of interest, or, at least, of curiosity. Its business is to *inquire*; and, of *whom*? It is to inquire into the *allegations* of divers petitions. By the way, the petitions of more than a *million* of men, who prayed for *Reform*, were never referred to a Committee! There was no inquiry *then*! Now, these men, cannot pray any more. They *dare* not meet to agree on praying, while the farmers, nicknamed *agriculturists*, have formed associations all over the kingdom! And, *they* are praised, and their praises are chaunted, up to the skies!

But, *who* are to be the witnesses examined by this Committee? Is it *opinions*, or is it *facts*, that the evidence is to consist of? It would have been advantageous for us (as the *whole nation* is

deeply concerned) to be informed of the *nature of the evidence*, while the Committee was yet sitting; for, then, it might have occurred to many of us to offer *our evidence*; which might have served to weigh against that of the witnesses-already examined. Or is the Committee *secret* as well as *select*? And are the witnesses *select* as well as the Committee? And, if so, *who* selects them? These are very material questions; and, I do assure you, GAFFER GOOCH, that they will be frequently put, when the *Report* shall make its appearance. The Report must, of course, be founded on the *evidence* given before the Committee; and, therefore, every thing depends on the *who* and the *what* the witnesses are. To ask a farmer whether he is in *distress*, is to ask him whether he gets as much money as he wishes to get, and that is like asking a drunkard if he be thirsty, and whether a glass of gin would do him good. To ask a farmer what is the *cause* of his distress, is to ask him whether prices be not *too low*; and to ask him to point out a *remedy*, is to ask him, whether he does not think that there ought to be a *new Corn-Bill*, to which if he do not answer in the affirmative, he

is a bastard son of the soil, and has not in him one drop of true blood. It is manifest, therefore, that the *public* will pay very little attention to evidence of *this* sort.

There is another awkward thing, too. The "*Lords of the Soil*" will naturally desire to see a clear case made out against the *Lords of the Funds*. Now, strange as it may seem at first sight, I am deceived, if this species of *select* evidence will afford much in support of the idea, that *Peel's Bill* has been the great cause of the distress. Those big farmers are, for the most part, Lords of the Funds themselves! What they have *there* is dearer to them than their *leases*. They will cling to that. They are, too, *money-lenders*, perhaps, though they bawl about *distress*; distress meaning, in their dictionary, a *diminution of gain*. There are farmers enough who are *ruined*; and, if they be brought to tell *their* tale, we shall hear them with attention, especially if they give an account of the *rent* they have been paying, and of the *true state* of their labourers. But, if *big farmers* be the witnesses, ten to one they have, each of them, *fitted out an attorney or two* that they have bred upon their farms. Nay, there are some of them

Bankers. They belong to the *system*: they are legitimate children of Pitt: they keep his birthday: and, they must not say any thing that has a tendency to discredit the system! So that, their evidence will not, perhaps, much serve the "*Lords of the Soil*," upon the *whole*; for, unless these can get a dig at the Lords of the Funds, all their efforts are unavailing.

But, now to the matter to be *inquired into*. What is it?—Whether the farmers be in *distress*? That point is settled.—But, what is next? A remedy? Oh, no! The proof of the existence of distress is by no means sufficient to warrant any legislative measure for the removal of that distress, even supposing such measure to be within the power of the legislature. For, if it be *necessary to the good of the community in general*, that the distress should be left without a remedy, it ought so to be left; unless we adopt the monstrous doctrine, that *one particular class* is to be relieved by means that would injure all the other classes. Low *price* of corn is what the farmer complains of. This injures him; but, if it be found (as I am sure is the fact), that the low price is *good for the labourer*,

then the benefit is greater than the evil. The thing ought not, in fact, to be called *agricultural* distress; but merely a *pinching* of great farmers and landlords.

These do not make above one against twenty of the labourers; and, if the latter gain by the present state of things, this state of things ought not to be called *agricultural* distress. The labourers live by agriculture, or, rather, recently, have starved by it; and, therefore, *they*, as well as the landlords and farmers, ought to be taken into view; and, I insist, that, if the labourer's lot have been mended lately, it is not *agricultural* distress, but *agricultural* happiness that the present petitions complain of.

I have observed, that, in the presenting of these petitions, the number of acres of land, the petitioners occupy has always been poked forward, and not the number of petitioners. "A petition from occupiers of 200,000 acres of land." This is the way in which the thing has been faced up. Perhaps the number of persons did not exceed eighty, or a hundred at most. The acres it is that petition! And, I believe, the acres, that is, the *Landlords*, do really make up the greater part of the *bona fide* petitioners! Now, what I should like to see produced would be the petitions of the *five thousand labourers*, who do the work on the 200,000 acres of land. Let me see these men petition for "a remunerating price." And then I will say, that the petitions are worthy of attention. "A remunerating price!" Was there ever such a coxcomical phrase

heard of before! Our fathers used to talk of the *market* price. That was the only price that they ever heard of. What is meant by "a remunerating price?" Who is to tell what it is, except by the market? What an *audacious* thing to say, that the whole of the farmers of a nation cannot get a *remunerating* price, when all the lands are cultivated, and when men take their farms at their own pleasure! What an *impudent* thing! What should we say to a butcher, who was to petition for a *remunerating* price? "I am losing by my business," says he, "pray cause me to have a higher price for my meat; pray pass a law to relieve my *butchering* distress." "Get out, you blackguard," should we say. "Well," replies he, "I must leave off butchering, then."—"Leave off, with the Devil to you," we should rejoin, "who cares? If you cannot get money enough by butchering go at something else. Trouble us, at any rate, no more with your impudence." This is the way we should treat a butcher; and, what reason is there for our treating the farmer with more ceremony? If, indeed, the farmer, the butcher, the taylor, the landlord, or any body else, comes and complains of *contracts* violated, and especially by acts of the legislature; if he complain of laws, or regulations, uncontrollable by him, which has plunged him in distress; that is to say, if he complain of *partial* laws, we attend to him. And, if the farmers and landlords were to complain in *this* way, they would be listened to in spite of all that

the system could do : but, as long as they complain of *want of price*, so long will they be laughed at by some and detested by others ; and this is precisely what they merit.

That the labourers have gained, and greatly gained, " by Agricultural Distress " is certain. Not because they *say* so, or because any body else *says* so, but because the thing *must be so*. Labourers, Smiths, Wrights, Shoemakers, Taylors, Masons, all the working people, in short, are, and must be, bettered by a *falling market of corn*, and especially the *farm-labourer* : he must be bettered in a great many ways ; in a great many *little things*, and on the score of prices of labour besides. But, is not the *nation* bettered too from the same cause ? When did we, until these days, hear of *millions* of " TRACTS, " moral and religious " for the purpose of keeping the *poor* from cutting the throats of the rich ? The parson's sermon, once a week, or fortnight, used to be quite sufficient for the religion and morals of a village. Now we have a busy creature or two in every village, however small, dancing about with " *Tracts* " for the benefit of the souls of the labourers and their families. It is surprising to see how eager these meddling things are in this way. The gist of the whole of the Tracts is, to inculcate *content* in a state of misery ! To teach people to *starve without making a noise* ! To teach them to die *quietly* ! I picked up in a *stage-coach*, the other day, a " *Tract*," which a sanctified piece of female antiquity had left behind her, enti-

led, " *Happy Poverty*," or the " *Lancashire Cottager*." What does all this show ? Why, a consciousness on the part of the rich, that the poor have not *fair play* ; and that the former wish to obtain security against the latter by *coaxing*.

And, what has brought things to this pass ? Why, the *high prices of corn*. This is the fact. No matter, as to my argument, what produced the high prices of corn. It was those high prices that brought down the labourers, that made them marry without forethought, that swelled the list of paupers, and that made them comparatively *regardless of character*. One of the first consequences of high price, was, the driving of the single labourers, the boys, the young women and the girls *from the farm-house*. Each considerable farmer used to have one head carter, and one under carter at the least, a couple of threshers, a shepherd, a cow-boy, a couple of young women, and a girl or two, *all in the house* ; and all *sitting at the same table with the master and the dame*. These took the head of the table, had the first cut, perhaps ; but all sat at the same board. Here was a group of young people bred up under the eye and in the company of those who were so well able to teach them their various duties, and whose *interest* it was to see them perform those duties with regularity, and in the very best manner, and whose *example* must necessarily be powerful. Here was *education*. Here were early rising, industry, good hours, sobriety, decency of language, clean-

liness of person, due obedience, all taught, and that, too, by competent teachers, who had a deep interest in the success of their teaching. This was *England*: this was an English farm-house. And how shall language afford words wherein to express our detestation of the man, who, by means of his Paper-System and consequent high prices, broke up these schools of the youth of the country! It well becomes fools and villains to celebrate the birthday of such a man.

These were the *schools* that an *English community* recognized. Instead of these schools, we have *Lancaster's-system* and *Bell's-system* and the *Tract-system*, and, at last, we are to have the *Brougham-system*, which is to cram "*education*" into the heads of poor ragged things with empty bellies.

In the farm-houses there used to be a long oak table, three inches through, at which the whole family sat. The breakfast was by candle-light in winter; and it consisted of beer, bread and bacon or other food, prepared by the dame and the maids, while the men and boys and masters went out to feed and clean their horses and cattle by lantern-light. It was not a mess consisting of *tea-water* and *potatoes*. When the men went out, they had their bottles of beer and their luncheon bags. It was not *water* and cold *potatoes* to eat in the field. The return from plough was the signal for dinner, the horses having been fed first. At night all assembled again, and all were in bed four hours before midnight. This was *education*.

This was *good-breeding*. From this arose the finest race of people that the world ever saw. To this the nation owed its excellent habits. All was in order here. Every one was in his place. These were the breeding places of sober and able workmen. This supplied the cities, occasionally with their most active and successful tradesmen and merchants; and it supplied the fleet and army with *hardy* men, fashioned to due subordination from their infancy.

Curse on the Paper; curse on the system; curse on the *high prices* that broke up those *schools*, and drove the scholars into *hovels*, and, indeed, deprived them of house and home.

Poor-rates! Paupers! How should it be otherwise? When a boy was under the eye of, and almost constantly in company with, a master, he necessarily became industrious, regular, skilful in his calling, and obedient; and, when grown up, he was not only an useful man, but had a spirit of pride that restrained him from mean and vicious courses. Compare this with the poor thing, left to the command of a miserable mother, while the father is out at work. See the ragged, disorderly, idle, disobedient young dog, roaming about here and there, at play half his time, and not unfrequently thieving, uncensured, too, by his wretched parents, whose hunger is their justification. Such a boy is little better than a gypsy in dress, look and manners; and, is it any wonder if he make his exit on the gallows? At least he is but a poor half-grown man at last.

He has not had the food requisite to his proper growth. He is but *half a labourer*. His habits are those of idleness, irregularity, and disobedience. *Bred up a pauper* he has no desire to keep from the list. From his very earliest days, he has been in the *habit* of hearing the schemes and devices of his miserable parents for obtaining *relief from the parish*. He has, too, been listening to *their curses on the rich*. And thus he is formed and fashioned to craft and meanness, and to envy and hatred of those, whom, in a good state of things, he would respect and honour. It is useless to preach to such a man: it is useless to tell him, that he must "not covet other men's goods;" and that he must "order himself *lowly and reverently* to all his *bettters*." I put it to any parson, who has lived forty years in his parish (if there be such an one in the whole kingdom), whether his parishioners have not wholly changed character: whether they have not, with the increase of their poverty and degradation, become careless of character, and disrespectful towards those whom their well-fed and well-clad forefathers treated with respect. This is in human nature. *Slaves* are proverbially insolent. They yield to the *lash*; but, they curse the hand that holds it; than which nothing can be more morally just.

Early marriages in the labouring classes, are a great evil; but this arises from the same *cause*: the misery, the hopelessness of the parties, and especially from the *driving of them from the farm houses*. They are grown up; the

parents' hovel is too small to contain the whole brood; they want a hovel; and to get a hovel from the parish they must marry. *MALTHUS*, unfeeling *Malthus*, would *punish their offspring for this!* The parson never looked at the *causes*. The parson thought that he could *check* the breeding. He talked of "*moral restraint!*" There *were* moral restraints a plenty when young people had comfortable homes in farm houses, and could, while they lived well, save a little money; and when to be a pauper was a *disgrace*. These were the true "*moral restraints*;" the hope of getting on in the world, and the fear of pauperism. Besides, in the good state of things, very frequent were the intermarriages between the farming and the labouring classes. The carter very often married his young mistress, and as often, the farmer's son one of the maids. But the Paper-System; that infernal system brought into full play by Pitt, has created a *farming aristocracy*, who now mix with attorneys, bankers, jews, jobbers, and all sorts of devils. The link of connection, the community of feeling, between the farmer and the labourer is broken. The *pride* of the latter, that great protection against pauperism, is gone; and it was fast getting into a state of *masters and slaves*, if *low prices* had not come to give us a chance of seeing better days.

The way to provide a "*moral restraint*" from early or improvident marriages, is to let the state of things be such as to afford *hope* of bettering his lot to the prudent, and to inspire *fear* of *disgrace* in

the imprudent. If there exist neither this hope nor this fear, where is any moral restraint to be found? If it be no disgrace to be fed by the parish, how are we to expect this restraint being imposed? If the party knows, that his lot cannot be made *worse* by indulgence; if he knows, that his children *must be fed* by others, what should restrain him? The blacks in the Northern States of America have greatly decreased by being *made free*. In Long Island they have diminished in numbers prodigiously. The only paupers in the island are found amongst them; but, even *they are ashamed to be paupers*. This is a very striking fact; but, it is what common sense would naturally expect. Having to *provide for their offspring*, they take time to calculate, even those thoughtless beings take time to reflect, before they take the preliminary steps to the having of families.

It is nonsense, then, to rail against the poor for being paupers. The fault is not theirs. It is the system that has degraded them. It is the system that has made them wholly careless about maintenance of family. It is the system that has made them "*rounds-men*," and that *billeted* them upon farmers as soldiers are upon the ale-house keepers. It is the system; the Pitt and Paper system, with its *high prices*, that has produced all these evils; and yet, there are audacious miscreants found to *hold festivals* in honour of the memory of Pitt, whose statue is stuck up in the very Guildhall of London, surrounded with the emblems of Jus-

tice, Wisdom, Abundance, and happy Industry!

Now then, GAFFER GOOCH, as high prices drove the man and maids, the boys and girls from the farm-house, and as this is such a mother of mischief, ought we not to rejoice at the present *low prices*? If, as I am sure is the case, *fifty gain where one loses*, by the low prices, ought the parliament to pass any act to *raise the prices*, or to *keep them up*? This ought to be matter of *strict inquiry with your Committee*; and, indeed, you ought to *have labourers before you*. You ought to ask them, whether *they* desire high prices. You ought to ask some old labourers, *when* it was that they were driven out of the farm-house. You ought to ask them *when* it was that the *beer-bottle* was banished; and *when* it was that they themselves (being married) *ceased to brew their own beer*. You ought to ask them, *when* it was that they took to the eating of *potatoes* instead of *bread and bacon*. And, if you find that all these took place at the time when *high prices* came, and when the farmers began to wear shining boots, white cravats, and broad cloth coats, instead of spatterdashes, red handkerchiefs, and smock-frocks, ought you not to recommend that which will bring prices *still lower*? You ought, when a big farmer comes before you, to ask *how many farms* his present farm formerly consisted of; *how many* little farmers have ceased to be farmers to make up his farm. Here you would get at information *truly valuable*. How many little industrious hives this hornet has driven off; how

many decent families his wide-stretching grasp has enveloped in ruin and pauperism. What a system! And shall not the nation rejoice to see this system going to pieces? Its evils were not seen during the noise and bustle of the storm of war; but, now that the storm is over and the *swell* is come; now the crazy thing rolls about; now we see the shattered masts and yards, we hear the ominous creaking, and see the planks open and shut; and *to pieces she goes*, mind, in spite of all the pumping and all the patching of all the projectors that this projecting time has hatched into life and activity.

But, you will say, is the present race of farmers to be *ruined*. Yes, if necessary to the general good. Besides, what is *ruin*? Is it ruin for men, who always ought to have *laboured*, to be brought to labour? Is it ruin to leave off wearing shining boots? Is it ruin to put on a smock frock? The *big big* ones are fund-holders or money-lenders (and sometimes to their "lords of the soil"), and, therefore, they are safe. They will get rid of their farms, and live on their means, and, perhaps, come to inhabit some of the above *ten thousand new houses actually building this very year round about London*. They will quit "Agricultural Distress," and come here, and enjoy its blessings. Those who remain farmers must have their *rents lowered*, until they can make both ends meet. They must themselves put their hand to the plough now-and-then, and not think of a *ride round the farm*. The farms must be *divided*; and,

above all things, the *rents must be lowered*!

This is the git! This is the toucher! This it is that makes all the *stir*; all the *ferment*; all the bubbling and boiling. I have not yet forgotten the *printed address*, sent by the *Landlords of Huntingdonshire* to their Tenants, *calling upon the Tenants to petition for "remunerating" prices!* I inserted this address in my *New Year's Gift to the Farmers*, published on the sixth of January last. You have read of the cunning Monkey, that used the *paw of the Cat to rake the Chesnuts out of the fire*. Poor pussy! And the *monkey eat the chesnuts after all*; never having intended any part of them for the cat! Poor silly pussy!

But, the trick will not take in the case before us. We all know, that it is *rents* that are wanted; and we know that they cannot be had with the present prices, and with the present taxes; and we also know, that prices must come still lower unless Peel's Bill be repealed, and that if the present taxes be not paid, there must be "a *breach of national faith!*" Distracting difficulty? For, if a "breach of national faith" take place, *in will come the Reformers*. Horrible consequence!

What, then, is the *probable result* of the proceedings of your Committee? A *Report* to be sure. Aye, aye; but what will the Report *say*? What will it recommend? Not a *new Corn-Bill*: not a *repeal of Peel's Bill*: not a *taking off of taxes*. If it do either of these I shall be very much surprized; and, if it do the *first*, petitions will come down

upon the "Grand Council" like hail-stones, and these, too, of no contemptible size. And yet, if it do neither of these, what will be the *use* of it.

The public is waiting with great curiosity to see what the Committee will do. The farmers, the big greedy farmers expect *something done to raise prices*. The Landlords expect the same. The fund-holders, fearing that *desperation* may urge the "Lords of the Soil" to a "breach of national faith," hardly know what to expect or what to wish for. The rest of the community, except the tax-eaters (who feel with the fund-holders) wish that things may go on; and the Reformers have the laugh half out before the Report appears. The result will probably be the *doing of nothing at all*; or, at most, some little thing to *amuse* the Landlords, while the present *experiment* is pushed along to its utmost extent.

My opinion decidedly is, that the Ministers will never run the risk of another *Corn Bill*. If they were to do it, such a Bill would be of no use to the farmers or Landlords. But, it is what they will not do; and the Landlords will not dare to contend for it against the Ministers. Therefore, to get high prices is impossible, without a *repeal of Peel's Bill*; and then comes the *feast of the Gridiron*; then comes my victory over the Banishment-Act Parliament. This repeal would be *such a thing!* It would be so shameful; so capon-like; so scandalously contemptible a thing; the very dogs would lift up their legs against the "Great Council." I should fill half a dozen of the

Six-Acts Registers with quotations from speeches of "*great men*" in praise of the Bill. No: this is too horrible to think of with any degree of patience. It cannot be; it must not be. "Perish rather," said Sangrado, "the city and the suburbs, than give up our system."

Yet, the Landlords can have *no rents* without this! Well: they have had their day. They and the big farmers have ridden their Cavalry Horses, as the Reformers of *Manchester* know full well. They must now do as well as they can. They may be stripped of their estates; but, did they not pledge their *fortunes* and their *lives* to put down the doctrines of PAINE? What right have they, then, to complain, even if their *lives* be called for?

The public are divided in opinion on the subject of the repeal of Peel's Bill. Some people think it *will*, and some think it *will not*, be repealed. We are always prone to let our belief run with our wishes; and, as my wishes are very strong that the pretty fellows of Whitehall may be *stout*, and may stand to the Bill, through thick and thin, 'till the wheat come down to *four shillings a bushel*, I am disposed to believe, that the Bill will *not be repealed*. And then we shall, by about *next March*, see how the "Lords of the Soil" will look; we shall see, whether they begin to think of giving us a Reform of the Parliament.

Day-light is not clearer than the fact, that the Lords of the Funds, who now get so large a portion of the rents, will get (in conjunction with the other *tax-*

eaters) the whole of the rents, when wheat shall come down to four shillings a bushel. This is so plain a matter, that no one can dispute it, without openly setting truth and common sense at defiance. What, then, are the "Lords of the Soil" to do? To reduce the interest of the Fund-lords and the pay of the gentlemen in red-coats and of the pretty gentleman at Whitehall, they dare not attempt. What, then, will they stand gaping, with their hands in their empty pockets, till the Fund-lords actually come and take them by the shoulders and shew them the door of their own mansions? I really should not wonder if they were to do this; for, between the bullying of the Fund-lords and other Tax-eaters, and their fright at the Radicals, they appear to be spell-bound:

They have, as I observed in my Register of last week, one resource, and only one; and that is to *take off taxes*. Here they would have the people at their back. Malt, leather, salt, soap, candles, tea, coffee, sugar, beer, spirits, tobacco! All would be popular. Never talk about horses, houses, windows, stamps, and coaches. Let these remain, and drive at what the people use. This would make Whitehall begin to look about it. As I said before, talk big about preserving "national faith" all the while. Express horror at the idea of touching the funds. This is the only remedy. This is the last hope. To be sure it is a good and solid hope. It is an effectual remedy; but, the "Lords of the Soil" are bold only when they have to face the poor and defence-

less: then they are brave as Hector of Troy. However, time will tell us all about it. And, in the meanwhile, it is a satisfaction to know, that, let what will be done, the accursed system must give way.

4 April, 1821.

I left off last night as above. This morning comes the newspaper with the result of Mr. WESTERN'S opening of the campaign. Oh! shocking! Sad figure! As bad as that of the Neapolitans! Well, GAFFER, I said truly, that the "Lords of the Soil" were brave as Hector of Troy, when they had the poor and defenceless to deal with. Then they are courageous; then they talk big; then they look fierce, and "stretch the nostrils wide," to use a phrase of our "immortal bard," lest, if not quoted, it might be "coarse." Well, really, my Lord FOLKESTONE, "Sir Pompous Jolterhead," and "Discount" were not overcharged. And, out comes our poor friend PERRY, with a whine, that the motion was lost "because it was in favour of economy, and because Ministers are resolved not to adopt economy." No: you "invisible, unassailable and omnipotent being," it was not because it aimed at economy: it was because it aimed at the Funds, which you say ought to be sacred. Economy, indeed! how often must I repeat; how often must common sense din it in the ears of the Edinburgh Reviewers, that no economy can relieve the country. Does the "unaccountable" Mr. PERRY propose to reduce the pay of the Army,

Navy, Judges, Police People, Pensioners, Offices, Sinecures, and so on? O, no! What does he mean by *economy*, then? It is really "cheese-parings and can-dle-ends" that he must have in view. No: this of Mr. WESTERN was a dig at the Funds to be sure; as such, as a *beginning*, it had sense in it: but his tool failed him: it broke in his hand: it was what the French call a *coup manqué*.

I have inserted, below, *the whole of the debate* of Tuesday night. It is an interesting thing. It will be a thing often to refer to. And now, GAFFER, let me offer you some remarks upon it.

It was curious to observe, that amongst the opponents of the Bill, some opposed it because it would afford *no relief to agriculture*, and others, because it would afford relief to nobody but *the arming people*. Mr. JOHN WILLIAM WARD, that brightest star of the quizziological constellation; that nice divider of arguments; that awakener of great expectations, and never fulfilling them; that drawer of outlines and leaver of them not filled up; that seesaw politician, whom to catch on the level we must be as quick-sighted as hawks: this gentleman did, however, take a fair cut at the "*agriculturists*," as they are comically called. He expressed his *surprise*, that those who had supported "*the Pitt-System*" (I gave it that name, Mr. JOHN WILLIAM) should complain of *distress*! Devil! This is rather hard lines! It might have done very well for *me*, who do not stick at trifles; but, for the "*accomplished*" John Wil-

liam; the "*travelled*" John William, who vies even with the gentle son of the late gentle Chief Justice in knowledge of courts and lofty matters of state, and who can, with all the self-complacency imaginable, talk about the *balance of Europe*, while the tables of the Houses are covered with petitions praying for relief; and while the Houses know not which way to turn themselves amidst the contending difficulties; that John William, the polite and "*gentlemanly*" and candid; that *he* should think and say, that having supported the Pitt-System ought to shut the mouths of the supporters, let their *distress* be what it may, is what one could hardly have expected. As to the PITT-CLUBS, indeed, even John William might be permitted to say, that they ought to complain of *no distress*, let it be ever so great. Those are nests of creatures that deserve no mercy, of any sort. They are witnessing the evils of the system; they cannot deny their existence; they acknowledge and proclaim the existence of the evils; they confess that they proceed from the Pitt-System; and yet they celebrate the birth-day of the *deadly author* of that system! They deserve no compassion; but a great deal of *charities*; and, their *names* ought all to be collected, in all the counties, and put into a book; that we may all know them.

Here, therefore, I agree with John William; but, John William, though so "*travelled*," knows nothing about *Sinking-Funds*. Sir JOHN SHELLEY was right, when he called the thing a

"*humbug*." From the moment it was established, *Paine* declared it to be a *humbug*. In *Paper against Gold* it was *demonstrated* to be a *humbug*; and John William should have staid at home, and read in that A, B, C, of Political Economy. John William is famous for making the *skeletons of arguments*; but, he never *fills them out*. He never brings the flesh and blood and muscles and sinews. What was it in favour of the sinking-fund, to say, that it was not the joint child of *Pitt and Fox*? It was, after all, only their *adopted* child; for Dr. PRICE was the real Papa. Dr. Price had found out, that, a sinking-fund of *one farthing*, if established at the birth of Jesus Christ, would now have paid off a Debt consisting of a mass of guineas *bigger than the whole earth*; and, he thought, of course, that it was hard, if a sinking-fund of a million of guineas would not pay-off our Debt! The poor old man was so absorbed in admiration of *the power of figures*, that he did not stop to *reason* about the matter; if he had, he would have discovered, that he had hit upon a *humbug*, wherewith for a profligate and showy impostor to ruin and degrade a nation.

Mr. GRENFELL was against the repeal of the Malt Tax. That I could have sworn without hearing or reading the Debate. He deprecated the sentiments that had been uttered in favour of a "*breach of faith*." That he did, I'll warrant him! But, he went further, and said, that the Landlords should recollect, that, if they seized on the *Funds*, their

parchments would go too! That's right! Work 'them in that way! At them in all manner of ways; but, work them especially in that way; for, with such men, there is nothing like *a arm* for their own safety. Keep working them in that way, 'till wheat comes down to four shillings a bushel; and then they will have lost the power of resistance, even if they had the will and the courage to resist.

Mr. LOCKHART denied, that, in *that House*, any one had ever recommended a "*breach of public faith*." No: nor out of it neither; unless to *repeal a law* be a breach of public faith.

Mr. LOCKHART was not correct, however, in his notion, that the Fund-lords were exempted from *taxes*, which pressed on the Landlords. The Fundlords *eat* and *drink* and *wear clothes*, like the rest of us. They have houses, carriages, windows, servants, dogs, cats, rats and mice; for even the very food of the latter is taxed. They breathe the air of England, in short; and they must, then, feel the pressure of taxes. But, was there ever any thing so dolt-headed as to suppose, that the *tithes*, *rates* and *taxes*, are not finally paid by the *consumer*? And, do not the fund-holders consume as well as other people? Mr. LOCKHART does not see clearly yet. He has a mist still before his eyes. He does not get at a clear sight. When I last saw him, and when he (knowing that I was under *heavy bonds to keep the peace*) *challenged me* to fight a duel; in order to answer by mouth of pistol, that which he had not been able to answer with

his own mouth, though that mouth was loud enough as to report ; at that time, on that very day ; I told him and the band of noisy, riotous, bullying and even *swearing* BLACKS, of whom he was the chosen orator, that, before that day *four years*, they would begin to sing another tune. It was *four years ago last Tuesday was a fortnight* ; and, months before that I heard Mr. LOCKHART complain of the *ruin of farmers and landlords* ; for which I, as in duty bound, thanked God, seeing that that ruin is now become necessary to the good of the country and the stability of the King's throne !

Mr. LOCKHART said, that, unless some change took place, the *Landlords* would shortly become mere SERFS to the Fundlords. A *serf* is a *bondman*, one who, in fact, is the *property* of another ; but who, for the use of that other, was sometimes permitted to occupy lands, yielding to that other the profits of the occupation. Now, perfectly agreeing with Mr. LOCKHART, that this must be the case, if things go on in the present way, I by no means agree with him in *lamenting* the prospect. The persons whom I feel most concern about are the *labouring classes*, those whom some of the Landlords call "the *lower orders*" and some the "*pea-santry*." Their lot cannot be made *worse*, except by means that would prevent the Landlords (for a while, at least) from becoming SERFS. I see what it must be for such haughty fellows to become SERFS ; but, being at the bottom of a damp dungeon for *four years and a half*, or even

two years and a half, is worse than being a SERF ; for a Serf enjoys the open air at any rate ; and his Lord (especially a Fundlord) will take care, that he do not die for want of exercise.

But, while I agree with Mr. LOCKHART, that the present "*Lords of the Soil*," are very likely to become Serfs, I cannot agree with him, as to *the way*, in which the thing works. I cannot agree with him in supposing, that the Landlord and farmer are borne down by *unequal* pressure of taxation. For, place taxes where you will, they finally reach every creature in the community. They reach even those who live out of the taxes ; but, then, these have a compensation, and more than a compensation in what they receive out of the taxes.

However, though no one is, in its first operation, exempt from the pressure of taxation in proportion to his means and his expenditure, taxes may *enrich some* and *ruin others*. All things, generally speaking, arise out of land. The Landlord, therefore, would possess all these things to himself, were it not, that, to get any thing out of the land, he must have the aid of others. Labour is the chief thing ; but he must, in most cases, have some other things. He has to pay labourers, smiths, and various others. By the time that these are paid, his income (being the whole amount of his produce) is greatly reduced. Then if all these labourers, smiths, and the rest, *pay taxes*, they must be paid again out of his income. So that, fashion the thing how you will, to the *land*, to that out of which all things arise, the

weight of taxes finally come. To make the weight *unfelt*, the Land may make *loans*; and, while this is going on, the Landlord has a *fine time of it*; for, his labour being paid, in great part, out of high prices occasioned by an influx of money, he is pocketing twice as much as he ought. But, there must be an *end to borrowing*; and, well would it be for him, if that were *all*! O, no! There are the loans *all to be paid*; and, out of the *land* the payment must finally come. The necessary consequence is, that the land must refuse to pay the debts on it, or, it must surrender itself up to the money-lender.

"Do good for evil" says the Scripture; and I here fulfil it. Mr. LOCKHART wanted (or shammed to want) to shoot at me, or to run me through the body: and I have written this last paragraph for the express purpose of enlightening, if possible, the mind of Mr. LOCKHART.

I now come to Mr. JOHN SMITH (Banker of Nottingham, I believe), brother of Smith, who is a *Lord*, under the name of CARRINGTON, and who was a Banker himself, if he be not one now. This Mr. SMITH was *against the repeal of the Malt Tax*, because it would *shake the Funds*! He was very vehement in his censure of sentiments hostile to "*public faith*." Well he might! He said there were 900,000 Fundholders! What a brood! Come, then, my "*lords of the soil*," prepare to walk out; for, out you must go, and with nearly as short process as Radicals are sent to dungeons by you and I know *whom*! Mr.

SMITH said, that *foreigners* were alarmed at the talk of "*breaking faith*." Indeed! Yes; and that a foreigner had written him a letter to say this. Indeed! Well, then, my lords and 'squires of the soil, out you must march! But, Mr. SMITH's grand argument was, that, if the Funds went, the Land would *go*! He said, that *parchments would be no security*; and that, whenever the day came for violating "*public faith*," the Landholder would have *no security for his estate*; and, indeed, could not expect to have any; or, if he did, his expectations would be *disappointed*!

Mr. CURWEN, who came next, appears to have been duly impressed with these *arguments*; for he sang very *piano*: it was the *piano* without the *forte*. He *had thought*, and he did *think*, and he *trusted*, and he *hoped*; but, not a word about the *no longer paying the interest of the Debt*! What play is it, where some red-faced dare-devil goes boldly into a haunted chamber, and comes out as pale as death? He had seen or heard *something*! One would think this honourable member had recently *seen something*. Perhaps it has been you, GAFFER, in your Committee. At any rate, never did man appear so completely changed as Mr. CURWEN appears to have been. Mr. LITTLETON kept perfectly silent; and, if he did say any thing about the "*monster of consumption*," it was not above his breath.

CASTLEREAGH, taking advantage of the panic, fell upon the poor Landlords, pell-mell. He "*thanked God*, that the time

"was not come for *that house* to endure sentiments hostile to public faith; and he saw with pleasure, that those who suffered such sentiments to escape them, immediately recoiled with horror from what they had said." And, he intimated, that, this being the case, he was disposed to pardon them. "But," says he, "the danger is, that that may be attempted to be done *indirectly*, which no considerations will induce man to do *directly*." And then he went on to show, that the present Bill of tax-repeal was one of those *indirect* attacks. This was *very true*; but, I would have *faced* the buck, if I had been Mr. WESTERN, notwithstanding the *palaver*, which that "*respectable gentleman*" received at the opening of this speech.

The General went on, and really made, for once, an excellent speech; that is to say *for the occasion*. He had not much to do indeed. He found the enemy *en deroute*. The panic was so great, that he had little to do but to pick up laggards and deserters. In this state of things he seems to have relaxed to a joking and jeering mood. "No," said he, "taking off taxes will do *no good* to the farmer." "The farmer," added he, "ought to be *taught* to look for relief, from" - - - what, think you? - - - "that GENERAL WORKING OF EVENTS, which he trusted would, *'ERE LONG*, as it had done in *FORMER CASES*, lead to a return to prosperity!"

Bravo! He was *cheered* here; and well he might; for a finer piece of acting never was seen

on any boards in this world. I should like to have seen him when he uttered these words; and when, out of 400 members present, not one was found to remind him of his "*sudden transition from war to peace*," and of Canning's "Scene of prosperity hidden, *for a moment*," behind a cloud, only to appear with more splendour than ever." Not one: not a soul to ask him whether the "*sudden transition*" were likely soon to be over: not a soul to ask, how long Canning's "*moment*" was likely to last. Not a creature to inquire (with all due submission) what "*a general working of events*" might mean; and whether it resembled the operation of yeast among wort; or the meeting of clouds charged some with water and some with fire. I believe, that the "*general working*" of events will resemble, a good deal, the latter sort of working; and that the relief to the farmer, the only relief he will ever get, he will receive from the result of a most furious storm. But, to ask questions like these, the auditors must have been in possession of those *senses*, of which they seem, upon this occasion, to have been bereft by the panic, into which they had been thrown.

However, to make all sure; to prevent the possibility of rallying, on the part of the foe, CASTLE-REAGH told the House, that "HE should be SORRY TO ADVISE THE GOVERNMENT, if the wisdom of Parliament should decide against the continuance of this tax." This was enough! Not another

sound, but "*question! question!*" "was heard! Divide! divide!" And then came the thundering majority against the bill!

If he had said, "I will go out and let in the Whigs, who *must* repeal the *Six Acts*," he could not have produced a more strong impression. Thus, at last, here it is, in one word: the Landlords will submit to *any thing*; aye, to *any thing*, rather than run the *risk of Reform*! That is the gist of the whole story from beginning to end. Rather than do justice to the people, they will endure *any thing*. However, they, besides, buoy themselves up with *hopes*. These are *vain*; but, no matter. They have their weight for *awhile*; and *awhile* is all that is wanted.

Now, GAFFER GOOCH, if you read this letter attentively, you will derive more knowledge from it than from all goose-gabble of all the "agriculturists" in the kingdom. I long, I die, for the *Report* and *Evidence* of your Committee. These will be a treat indeed! No man that has them in his possession need go to Sadler's Wells, or to Ast'ey's, for a month: his time and lungs will be much better employed at home. One thing I do hope you will do: and that is, to send a copy to every *Radical's* dungeon. I would endure six month's dungeoning myself, rather than not read this *Report* and *Evidence*.

So, no more, at present, from,

Dear Gaffer,

Your most obedient

And most humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

B

Mr. WESTERN said, that before he moved the Order of the Day for the second reading of the Malt Duty Repeal Bill, he wished to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer at what sum he estimated the duty on malt? There was an observation which he wished to make on the Scots malt duty. Scots malt had, ever since the imposition of the malt tax, been subjected to 8d. less per bushel than English malt, on the ground of its inferior quality. In 1804 a Committee was appointed to consider the propriety of continuing this difference, and it had decided in the affirmative; but when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in 1819, proposed the additional duty of 1s. 2d. on English malt, he imposed an additional duty of 1s. 10d. on Scots malt, professedly to do away with the inequality. —It was extraordinary that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should, in the face of the Resolution of the Committee of 1804, have deprived the Scots barley of this exemption. He however, wished to disengage this question from the consideration of the difference which should be made between Scots and English Malt, and should propose the repeal of the Duty of 1s. 2d. which would press on both countries alike.

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER estimated the produce of the additional Duty on Malt at 1,500,000l. He had no objection to revive the Committee of 1804.

Lord A. HAMILTON said, it would be recollected that he had moved last year to repeal the additional Tax of 8d. per bushel which had been imposed upon Scots Malt. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had resisted that mo-

tion. He (Lord A. H.) was aware that, in giving his support to the present Bill, he was not settling the question of the proportion between the Duties on Malt in the two parts of the kingdom, but in voting for taking off 1s. 2d. per bushel he was relieving the whole kingdom. If this Bill was carried, he had no doubt that the justice of the barley grower in England would assist the Scots Members in putting the Scots Malt Duty on a fair footing. The notion seemed to have been industriously circulated that the English Members would not be willing, if this measure was carried, to take the Scots Duties into consideration, and it had been particularly attributed to his Honourable Friend, the Member for Norfolk, that he was of this opinion. He believed this assertion was unfounded, and he therefore wished his Honourable Friend to state what his opinion was.

Mr. COKE said he was convinced that it was absolutely necessary for the landed interest to unite in carrying measures in which they had a common interest. He was ready to say, that if the present measure was carried, he would go into a Committee on the Scots Malt Duty, and that he had never been adverse to such an inquiry. He highly approved of the Bill before the House, but he thought a still further reduction of the taxes which pressed on land was necessary.

The Order of the Day for the second reading of the Malt Duties repeal having been read,

Mr. WESTERN moved that the Bill be read a second time.

Sir J. SHELLEY, in allusion to a former speech of Mr. Huskisson, contended that the agricultural distress was now general. The Right Honourable Gentleman was speaking on the experience of the western part of Sussex, where the farmers were not in an absolute state of ruin; but if

he looked to the eastern parts of the same county, there he would find the ruin complete. He would there find many hundred acres which he might occupy merely on paying the poor's rates and taxes, and this not very bad land, or land newly brought into tillage, but land which had been cultivated for centuries. The distress did not fall on the farmers alone. The moderate landed proprietors suffered as much. They had their farms thrown back upon their hands, and were obliged, if they would not let them unoccupied, to get them tilled by hired bailiffs, who had no interest in them. It had been asked how, if this tax was repealed, the interest of the debt could be paid? The Chancellor of the Exchequer had told them that this year there was a saving of a million. The country would not find any benefit from this, unless there was a proportionate reduction of Taxes. It was better therefore to repeal the Tax in question, than to add in some small degree to the inefficient Sinking Fund, by which the Country had been for a long time humbugged (a laugh). *The agriculturists could not expect relief from the fundholders.* They must therefore look to his Majesty's Ministers. If an absolute reduction of the amount of taxes could not be suffered, he should propose a limited Property Tax of (say) two per cent. by which three millions might be raised; other taxes to an equal amount being repealed. It had been said, that if this tax was repealed, his Majesty's Ministers would resign (a laugh). He (Sir J. S.) did not wish to see them resign their places, he only wished them to resign a few of their taxes.

Mr. J. W. WARD said, there were only three grounds on which he could be requested to repeal this tax. 1st. That the country could go on with its present taxes, and 1½ million less taxes. 2d. That the expenditure might be reduced 1½ million per ann.; or, 3dly, that a less burthensome tax might be imposed. As to the first of these suppositions, it could only be realized by taking 1½ million from the Sinking Fund. The merit of the Sinking Fund was a subject which was better discussed in the closet than in a deliberative assembly. But thus much he might say, that if Parliament, at

the earnest solicitation of a Government in which it ought to confide, had determined in 1819 that there should be a large Sinking Fund, it would betray discreditable vacillation to shrink, in 1821, from carrying that Resolution into effect. If the Sinking Fund was a fallacy, to use a gentler term, for the idea which his Honourable Friend (Sir J. Shelley) had conveyed by a different word, it was a fallacy of some standing. It had deceived Parliament and the public, including the wisest statesmen whom the country had known, from the time of its original establishment. Both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox were among its supporters. But still he was open to argument upon this subject, if argument were adduced to shew the fallacy of this system; for he could never oppose authority to demonstration. But in the absence of argument or demonstration, he could not be influenced, by mere abuse, to become the opponent of the Sinking Fund, or an advocate for reducing its amount.—At least he should not agree to this until some new discovery were made to convince him of its justice and expediency. What might be the nature of that discovery he could not anticipate. The world at one time believed that the sun moved round the earth—but it had been since discovered that the earth had moved round the sun. Possibly too it might yet be discovered that it would be rather better not to make any provision for a Sinking Fund to discharge the national debt, but until that discovery were made, he must be excused for retaining his present opinion. He, therefore, deprecated any attempt to reduce the Sinking Fund, and while he was willing to sanction any practicable system of retrenchment, he could not agree to the idea, that after voting the present establishments, the House could consistently withhold from Government the means of supporting those establishments, as the present Bill proposed. But if this were even the first day of the Session, before any establishments were voted, he would not support the measure before the House, because he could not see the propriety of reducing our establishments consistently with a due regard to the safety of the country. The House had seen the peace of Europe recently disturbed, and with the

temper which prevailed abroad, he could see no safety in our dispensing with a large and respectable military force. He was himself among the most anxious to preserve this country in peace, but that could, in his opinion, be done by only keeping arms in our hands, particularly considering the situation of our neighbours, and the probable conflict between the excessive ambition of some Monarchs, and the vengeance or exhausted patience of the people. But how could this country maintain such a force if the means of Government were to be cramped by the Repeal of this Tax? An Honourable Baronet, in supporting that Repeal, had taken occasion to recommend the imposition of a small Property Tax in lieu thereof. For himself, he would say, that he had no objection to a Property Tax to a competent amount; to the principle of such a tax he could see no objection; the inquisitorial manner of collecting it was indeed, at all times, the cause of outcry against it. But when so many Gentlemen were found to oppose this Malt tax; when other Gentlemen called for the repeal of other taxes, while several evinced a disposition not to support any tax at all, how could any Ministers calculate upon success in the proposition of an Income Tax? A Gentleman had said, that in objecting to a tax he was not bound to find a substitute, as that was the duty of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Now, he would take the benefit of the Honourable Member's principle, and say, that he would not vote for the repeal of this Malt Tax until another and less objectionable tax were proposed in its stead. To consent to the proposed repeal would really be, in his judgment, a most inconsistent proceeding on the part of the House. A few days only had elapsed since the House had voted certain establishments, and would it not be extraordinary if the Bill sanctioning that vote should be overtaken at the foot of the Throne by another Bill refusing the means of support to such establishments. But would it not be still more extraordinary if such inconsistency should be maintained by the advocates of the Pitt system, nay, that even the Members of the Pitt Clubs should be among the foremost to starve the means of Government to support those very

measures for which they themselves had voted? He trusted that those Gentlemen who had voted for the present Bill on a former night, would reconsider their conduct, and take a course this evening more consistent with their own principles, and with the general interest of the country.

Mr. GRENFELL deprecated the idea of getting rid of the Sinking Fund, he meant of that substantial, real Sinking Fund which consisted of a surplus of our income over our expenditure. It did appear from financial papers upon the Table, that we had such a Sinking Fund or surplus income, and that fund he would by no means consent to touch for the purpose of affording any temporary relief to the country. It was in his view the imperative duty of Ministers to preserve the establishment of a Sinking Fund, as well for the gradual extinction of the public debt as for the moral effect of keeping up the public credit. Upon the measure before the House, it was his lot to differ from the general opinion of his friends around him. But having, in 1819, voted for the imposition of three millions of taxes for the purpose of sustaining the Sinking Fund, he should feel himself guilty of a gross dereliction of principle, if he voted for the proposed repeal of one of the taxes comprehended in that sum. It had been stated as one of the arguments for this repeal, that if taxes were taken off, Ministers would then be forced to adopt measures of economy, [hear, hear, hear!]. But to this argument he should say, that its advocates were proposing to begin at the wrong end [hear, hear, hear!]. If Gentlemen desired to economise, they should evince

that desire by reducing the establishments before they pressed for a reduction of the revenue; they should seek to lessen the public expence, before they proposed to lessen the public revenue. If an individual desired to economise, would he begin by reducing his rents, instead of reducing his expences? Certainly not; and the same rule which applied to an individual was also applicable to public affairs. He was not one of those who despaired of our resources if the country had fair play, and what he meant by fair play was this, that while every possible economy, for which he was as anxious as any man, should be duly consulted, peculiar care should be taken for the maintenance of a permanent Sinking Fund. Being upon this subject, he must take occasion to express his decided reprobation of any such breach of public faith, or spoliation of the public creditor, as had been lately heard of out of doors, and sometimes in that House. He lamented to find hints upon this subject becoming too familiar among the landed proprietors; for they ought to be aware, that if the property of the Fundholder was destroyed, there could be no security for their own. Without entering into the question whether the land of the country were mortgaged to the Fundholder, he warned the landowners to consider that the fundholders had quite as much right to invade their property, as the landowners had to invade the Funds. But to return to the subject before the House—if taxes were to be repealed; if any of the existing taxes could be repealed, he could not help thinking that the Malt Tax was not the first; on the contrary, he thought that the Salt

Tax ought rather to be selected, as it was known to be much more oppressive. He was not aware, indeed, that the Malt Tax, to which the Bill referred, bore any oppressive character, and he was assured that its repeal would not afford any relief to the agriculturists, which was the professed object of the measure, while such repeal must reduce the resources necessary to maintain that important establishment—a really available Sinking Fund.

Mr. LOCKHART declared that he never heard in that House any recommendation to violate the public faith, or to commit any spoliation upon the public creditor. But he had heard much in that House, as well as elsewhere, upon the extraordinary character of the system by which those who were the great receivers of the public revenue were exempted from paying their due share of the charges upon that revenue (hear, hear!); and certainly it was monstrous to suppose that such a system should go on—that while the receivers of the revenue, or the fundholders, enjoyed the whole, those who owned the property from which that revenue was derived, should be called upon to pay the whole, although all their property was reduced no less than 50 per cent. in value. The continuance of such a system, indeed, would serve to render the latter the *ascripti glebæ*, or the mere serfs of the former. With respect to the establishments which had been voted, it might be necessary to keep them up, but it did not follow that the expence of those establishments might not be reduced. As all the necessities and comforts in life had fallen in price, why might not an army be maintained

in this country at a cheaper rate now than formerly? and why then might not the proposed Bill be agreed to? The Honourable Gentleman who had delivered an eloquent speech on the other side (Mr. Ward,) had, in his solicitude for the Sinking Fund, pronounced an eulogium upon Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, as the advocates of that system; but the Honourable Gentleman had omitted to class the present Chancellor of the Exchequer with the objects of praise. This, indeed, was a very proper omission, for the Right Honourable Gentleman on the other side had reduced a Sinking Fund of 17 millions to about $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions, which sum bore so small a proportion to 900 millions, that this reduced sum might be very expediently applied to present exigencies. He would therefore supply a proportion of that sum, if necessary, to make good any deficit created by the repeal of this Malt Tax. He was an advocate for the repeal of this Tax, not because he thought it would afford any great relief to the agriculturists, but because he thought it the only relief which, from all appearances they had reason to expect. He saw a Committee sitting for some weeks to examine evidence as to agricultural distress, which was matter of notoriety; and from the proceedings of that Committee, or from any other legislative measure, he was much afraid that no relief was to be expected. For this Bill, then, as it offered the only relief which the agriculturists had to expect, he should give his vote. Here the Honourable Member presented an impressive picture of the extent of the agricultural distress. But the petitions upon this subject furnished ample in-

formation upon that subject. The condition of agriculture was, indeed, such, that the farmer had no profit, and the landlord had therefore no rent, but what he derived from the farmer's capital, and as that capital diminished, the means of course fell off of employing the labouring poor. How, he would ask, was it possible that such a state of things should continue? or who could answer for the tranquillity of the country, if an increasing proportion of the millions employed in Agriculture were thrown out of employment, and if those who could not find employment, could not obtain provision from the Poors' Rate. He had heard much of the political economy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and that of the Gentlemen near him, who so often said that those things would right themselves; but he wished to know from these economists by what process such things could be righted, or the equilibrium so much desired could be restored? The Honourable Member animadverted upon the inconsistency of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, after the repeal of the Income Tax, came down to give up this Malt Tax observing, with great apparent liberality, that as the rich had been relieved, the poor should be relieved also, and therefore he proposed the Repeal of this Tax in 1816; yet, in 1819, the Right Honourable Gentleman again brought forward this very tax (hear, hear!) The Honourable Member remarked upon the system of monopolising public-houses throughout the country, by which the brewers were enabled to sell what they pleased—by which, indeed, the poor were compelled to buy bad beer,

and defrauded by bad measures. For this evil he recommended some regulation with respect to the mode of granting licences. Reverting to the state of agriculture, he expressed his belief that Ministers were not aware of the extent of its actual distress. For although commercial distress was readily ascertained through the non-payment of bills, the distress of agriculturists, who were not in the habit of dealing in bills, was not so easily made known. But the misery which awaited this class, unless some great measure of relief were administered, it was quite dreadful to contemplate. After noticing the comments of the Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Ward) as to the votes of certain Gentlemen upon this Bill, who had formerly supported Mr. Pitt's system, the Hon. Member expressed his disapprobation of the idea that Gentlemen should allow themselves to be restrained by any prior principle or connexion from acting upon an honest change of opinion.

Mr. J. SMITH said, that differing as he did upon this question from the friends with whom he usually acted, he felt it necessary to state the reasons which had produced that difference. He had, he could assure the House, examined the subject of the present Bill with all the care and solicitude in his power, and he had arrived at a very different conclusion from that stated by his Honourable Friend who had just sat down. With the distress suffered by the agricultural classes, he sympathized as much as any man, but he could not think that the proposed repeal would afford any general relief to that body, while it would afford no relief to the consumers of beer, as the

reduction of eight or nine shillings in the quarter of malt would not produce a reduction of one halfpenny in the quart of porter or ale. Therefore, all the profits of the proposed repeal would rest in the pockets only of the public and private brewers. The Honourable Member recommended a revision of the poor laws, with a view to the relief of public distress, and especially that persons applying for relief should be granted none, unless they consented to labour. For this labour they should be allowed something less than the neighbouring farmers usually granted, and this system would have the double effect of reducing the amount of the Poors' Rate, and of stimulating labouring paupers to seek employment for themselves. This system had been acted upon for some time in his own parish, and he wished it were made general. He was anxious indeed that the Right Hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. S. Bourne) who had already rendered so much service upon this subject, would take this question into his serious consideration. Another mode of relieving the public distress was, by attending to that economy which was so often and so fruitlessly recommended in that House. But Ministers were not alone to blame for inattention to economy. That House had also its share of blame, for it assented to the expenditure of nearly a million of money for the erection of a building, which he had that day seen—he meant the Penitentiary at Milbank.—Another million of money had been expended in the Caledonian Canal in Scotland, and he must say, with regard to this project, that he had never heard a

single individual conversant with the subject who did not pronounce it to be one of the wildest and most profligate jobs that had ever been engaged in. With respect to the works at Sheerness, Milford Haven and Woolwich, the question was, could the country do without them? If we could do without them, they ought not to be persevered in under the present distressed circumstances of the country. Unless we retraced our steps, the distress of the agriculturists would not be the only distress which would be felt. There was one other topic to which he wished to advert before he sat down. He had heard, with the utmost concern, the observations which had fallen from some individuals in that House, for whom he entertained the highest respect, on the subject of the national debt. It had been stated from the high and respectable quarter to which he alluded, that it was idle, under the present circumstances of the country, to talk of preserving the national faith.—He (Mr. S.) considered that opinion, as well as many others which he had heard on the same subject, to have arisen from very erroneous and mistaken views. He thought there never was a moment which could be more ill chosen for the promulgation of such an opinion than the present. Whether this country had done right or wrong in contracting a large increase of national debt, it was no more than every other Power in Europe had done; and those Powers were now paying the public creditor at a much larger rate of interest than ourselves. The promulgation of such opinions had had the effect of producing much serious alarm in the

minds of many persons abroad, who were not tempted by the high rate of interest in foreign countries, and who kept property to a large amount in the English Funds. He had himself received a communication from a person of high rank abroad, in which he expressed the utmost surprise that England, which had been the bulwark for all Europe in the hour of danger, should now, at a period of profound peace, think of violating her faith with the public creditor. Was it possible they who advocated the expediency of such a measure, should not see that the non-payment of a part of the interest of the public debt, would be instantly followed by the most alarming and ruinous consequences? Were they aware that there were no less than 8 or 900,000 stockholders in this country? If the House reflected upon this circumstance, and upon the multitude of corporations, hospitals, insurance offices, and other interests, the whole property of which was vested in the public funds, it was quite clear that they would be committing an act of *jeto de se*, if they entertained for a moment any proposition for violating the national faith. The energies exerted by this country in the last war had not only been the means of saving ourselves, but of preserving the state of civilised society throughout Europe. The character which Great Britain had acquired, and hitherto maintained, was that of affording an asylum for property throughout the world. With a degree of generosity which he believed was perfectly unparalleled in the annals of ancient and modern history, at a time when our internal taxation amounted to a tenth part of the

income of the country, we religiously abstained from taxing foreign property vested in the English Funds.—There was no one act which had more contributed to raise this country in the estimation of foreign nations, than the act to which he had just alluded; and he trusted the House would never give its sanction to any measure, the immediate consequences of which would be to deprive the nation of that reputation which it had so honourably acquired.—With regard to the repeal of the present tax, he objected to it, because he thought it would not have the effect of relieving the Agriculturists, and because it would very naturally diminish the Revenue. The only way of extricating the country from its distresses, would be to cut off boldly and firmly all expenditures which were not essentially necessary. The Army ought unquestionably to be farther reduced. The Navy Estimates were not yet before the House, but he would himself undertake to shew, that very large reductions might and must be made in that department. The Honourable Member concluded by declaring his intention to vote against the motion.

Sir J. BOUGHEY said, he could not feel himself justified in supporting the repeal of this tax, unless he were assured by those Honourable Gentlemen who voted for the repeal, that it was looked upon as a measure of economy, and not as a substitute for any other measure of taxation.

Mr. CURWEN said, he felt obliged to the Honourable Gentleman below him (Mr. J. Smith) for having expressed his sympathy with the distresses of the Agriculturists, but he

could not help wishing he had shewn that sympathy either by supporting the measure before the House, or by proposing some practical measure for their relief. After such a body of evidence had been laid before the House, he thought it utterly impossible for them to separate without adopting some measure for the relief of the Agriculturists. Some relief might, undoubtedly, be afforded by a modification of the Poor Laws, but the plan of the Honourable Gentleman would be found quite impracticable. The Honourable Gentleman made no distinction between the situation of the Fundholder and the Landholder. Now, the Fundholder of 1,000l. a year received that income without the reduction of a single shilling,—but what was the situation of the Landholder, even in times of comparative prosperity? He paid 20 per cent. to the Poors' Rate, 5 per cent. for County Rate, 5 per cent. for Repairs of the Highways, &c. and two and a half per cent. for Collection, amounting in the whole to 32½ per cent. upon his whole income. He declared, that if the Taxes upon Leather, Soap, Candles, &c. and those Taxes which pressed more immediately upon the necessary articles of consumption, were repealed, he should be ready to give his support to a Property Tax of 5 per cent. It was quite impossible that the country could go on, unless a system of taxation were adopted which pressed more equally upon all classes of the people and the Fundholder was bound in justice to pay for the protection of his property as well as other classes of the community. With regard to the Tax now proposed to be repealed, it

was one which pressed particularly hard upon the great body of the people, and though the repeal of it might not afford any immediate relief to the agricultural classes, it could not fail to be ultimately beneficial. The Agricultural distresses did not arise, as had been stated in another place, from over-production, but from under-consumption. The present measure was calculated to increase the consumption, by lowering the price of barley, and could not, therefore, but have a beneficial effect upon the Agricultural interests.

Mr. BENETT said, he was as anxious to support the trade as the agriculture of the country. So intimate was the connection between the two great productive classes of the community, that it could never be sound policy to support the interests of one in opposition to the other. With regard to what had been said on the subject of the public debt, he was as anxious as any man to preserve the national faith; but, in order to preserve the national faith, it was absolutely necessary to reduce the present system of taxation. With regard to the measure before the House, he confessed that he did not believe it would afford all the relief to the agricultural interests which some Gentlemen imagined. It was calculated rather to relieve the consumer, than the grower of barley. One beneficial effect of this measure would be, that it would enable the labouring classes of the community, who were the great consumers of this commodity, to brew beer in their own houses; a comfort of which they had for many years been deprived, and a return to which, by removing the temptation of

resorting to ale-houses, would tend materially to the improvement of their moral habits.—He gave his hearty concurrence to the repeal of the Tax, as there was no man more anxious than he was to place Ministers under the necessity of putting into practice some of those principles of economy which Gentlemen on his side of the House had so repeatedly, but vainly, called upon them to adopt.

Mr. K. DOUGLAS said, that he would not follow the Honourable Member who spoke last into the irrelevant topics which he had introduced, while he scarcely touched upon the particular question before the House. He (Mr. D.) was as sensible as any man of the extreme distress of the agricultural interests, but he did not think that any material relief could be afforded them by the repeal of the Malt Tax. It was not of any importance to the farmer, as he could not derive any benefit from it, for the Return made to that House of the consumption of Malt, proved it to be as great as at any former period. On the whole, he considered it one of the most equal and least oppressive taxes that could be devised, as its operation extended over the whole community.

Mr. BRIGHT stated, that he did not vote against the tax on the ground that it was partial and unequal; on the contrary, he did not believe that it overlaid any particular kind of industry, or injuriously affected any of the necessities of life. But he felt himself called upon, at the present moment, to vote against it, that Government might, upon its removal, feel it necessary to carry into effect that vigilant and strict economy which alone could

preserve to the nation that renown and prosperity, which, by its great achievements, it had in the opinion of Europe acquired. He was convinced, that by shortening the money of Government, and by that alone, could they oblige Ministers to become faithful, vigilant, and economical guardians of the public purse [hear, hear!]. But it was said on the other side of the House, that to act in this way, was to begin at the wrong end, as they had at first voted the men required by Government, and then refused the money. It was, however, to be recollected, that there were other Estimates to come before the House; the Navy, Ordnance, and Miscellaneous Estimates were not yet voted, and he hoped the repeal of the tax would have the salutary effect of forcing Ministers to curtail those estimates to the amount of finances reduced by the abolition of this enormous malt tax. It was on this principle that he should vote against the tax. He did not entertain the opinion that the agricultural interest was more distressed than the commercial; all the interests of the country ought to be regarded as one and the same; they laboured under the same distress, and could have but the one remedy [hear, hear!], and that was economy. It was this alone that could restore Great Britain to the proud station which she had filled in modern Europe. The Honourable Member then proceeded to argue against those who objected to the Poor Laws and Tithes as the greatest grievances to land-owners, and unjust impositions upon their property. He observed, that the payment of tithes was part of the original contract by which land was held, and for the support of

the noblest institutions of the country—the Ecclesiastical Establishment. The imposition was as fair and legal as the title deeds that descended to gentlemen from their ancestors, and was part of the fundamental tenure of their estates. But he would entreat Gentlemen to abandon all partial interests, and manfully to set about redressing the common grievance of the country. He hoped they would imitate the Honourable Member for Aberdeen (Mr. Hume), and the consequence would be that the estimates which were to be submitted to the House next month, would undergo a considerable diminution.

Mr. BENETT and Mr. BRIGHT mutually explained.

Colonel WOOD observed that the agricultural and commercial interests were common and inseparable, and nothing could be more injurious to the nation than to represent them as separate. He could not, however, agree with the Honourable Member who had just spoken in his extraordinary opinion, that to beat down the finances of the country was the way to restore it to its proud position in the eyes of Europe. He concurred with those who stated that the Malt Tax affected the agricultural interests; he believed that there was no tax that pressed upon those interests more severely, or trenched more upon the comforts of the poor *in toto*, but the present Bill was not calculated to afford them any relief, as the brewers were not likely to reduce the price to the consumers; they would say, as they did on a former occasion, that they apprehended the Chancellor of the Exchequer would lay it on again. He then entered into a calculation to

shew that the removal of the duty could not affect the price of beer to the amount of one farthing a pot. If this Bill was passed into a law, the Honourable Members who made war upon the finances, would run the round of all the taxes; one would have the Wool Tax repealed, another the Tax upon Husbandry Horses, and a third the Window Tax; in short, if all the propositions for economy were to be attended to, nothing would be left to Government to economise [hear, hear, hear!].—No greater injury could be done to a State than to break down its income. As to what had been said of the Sinking Fund, he would merely observe that it was pledged to the public creditor, not only for the payment of the interest, but the gradual reduction of the debt, which was incurred by the State in the course of that great struggle, which the gallantry of our soldiers and sailors had brought to so successful a termination. There was, in point of time, an additional reason for considering the proposed measure as not quite fair. There was a Committee now sitting upon the subject of Agricultural Distress, and the promoters of the measure should have waited until they brought in their proposition, which he believed would not be a half measure. Much had been said of a Property Tax. He was of opinion that Parliament had committed a fatal error in having abolished that Tax. As to himself, he would vote for the repeal of the whole Malt Tax, if its place was to be supplied by a modified Property Tax, not a tax on trade and income, but one on landlords and the funds; such a tax would do more for the country in its

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difficulties, than any other measure. Gentlemen had not acted wisely in throwing the burden off its own shoulders, and laying it on the poorer classes of the community. But though he did not like the present tax for many reasons, he would vote against its repeal, because it would deprive the State of 1,500,000*l.* which could not be easily supplied, while, with reference to the country at large, it was but a half measure not likely to do any good.

Mr. F. LEWIS said, that he considered it decidedly wise in Parliament to have got rid of the Property Tax, as it was highly objectionable, both on account of its amount and the manner in which it was levied. On the other hand, the Malt Tax was diffused over as wide a surface of society as possible; but if its repeal was likely to afford relief to the agricultural interest, that consideration would have with him considerable weight. But he could never vote for one interest only. While he had a vote in that House, he would give it in conformity with the wisest, the most just and collective view which he was competent to take of the general interests. The repeal of the Malt Tax could not serve those general interests, and therefore he would oppose it. He calculated that the reduction in the price of porter, which the remission of the tax would occasion, would not amount to a farthing a pot. Undoubtedly, with reference to the general principles of political economy, that remission would in the long run benefit the agricultural interest, but it could not effect that sudden relief which the advocates of the repeal considered to be indispensable. He by no means

considered the Malt Duty as the most oppressive tax on the landed interest. The Stamp Duty, in the various forms in which it operated, was much more oppressive.

Colonel WOOD explained.

Captain GORDON corroborated the statement which had been made in that House of the agricultural distress existing in the North of Scotland. He did not conceive, however, that the present Bill would go to its relief.

Mr. SMYTH strongly recommended economy, both in our military establishments and in the expence of collecting the revenue. The best preparation for war was to husband our resources in peace. He should certainly vote for the repeal of the tax.

Lord CASTLEREAGH, before he made the observations which occurred to him as necessary on the subject, requested the Clerk to read the Resolution of the Committee of the whole House in 1819.

The Clerk accordingly read the Resolution, which was to the following effect:—"That to provide for the carrying on of the Public Service, for the payment of the interest of the National Debt, and for the future diminution of that debt, it was absolutely necessary that there should be a clear surplus of revenue beyond the expenditure of not less than five millions; and that in order to secure that surplus, it was expedient to increase the income of the country by three millions."

The Resolution having been read, the Noble Lord proceeded to state to the House the grounds on which he should vote on the subject. He could

assure the Honourable Member for Essex, that in rising to redeem his pledge when the Bill was introduced; namely, that he would give it his most strenuous opposition, he did so with great pain. It was no inconsiderable source of regret to a person standing in the situation of responsibility which he occupied, to resist, at a moment of pressure, a suggestion from so respectable a Member, which had for its object the diminution of the public burdens. But he felt that in doing so on the present occasion, he was discharging an important public duty to all classes of the community, and to none more than to that great class of the people who were now peculiarly under circumstances of difficulty. Arduous and painful as his task was, it would have been still more so, could he persuade himself that the repeal of the duty in question would really give relief to those for whose relief it was intended. But while on the one hand he was convinced that the interest of the community at large was the true interest of the landholder, so on the other hand he was also persuaded, that if the country were in a situation to allow of the remission of any Tax, the Duty on Malt was not the Tax which ought to be selected for that purpose. He had listened with great pain to many of the topics which had fallen from Honourable Gentlemen in the course of this and preceding debates. *He thanked God, however, that the time was not come when sentiments injurious to the credit of the country, or subversive of the great principles of public faith, would be listened to with favour.* He even endeavoured to persuade himself, that

those by whom such sentiments were uttered, *suddenly recoiled from their avowal, and endeavoured to explain them away.* *He was not afraid that a British Parliament would ever forget those principles of justice and good faith by which this country had been so long upheld.* But what they had to guard against was being induced to *do that indirectly which no consideration would tempt them to do directly.* It would be as great a breach of honour—it would inflict as great an injury on public credit—it would be as destructive of national prosperity, to allow the *revenue to be undermined* in such a manner, as to render the payment of the interest of the debt dependent only on precarious loans, raised on the security of a Bankrupt Exchequer [hear, hear, hear!]. At the outset, therefore, *he warned the House*, at a moment when the surplus of the revenue was not sufficient to allow of any progress being made in the reduction of the Debt, and when the House was quite unable to redeem its pledge of 1819, to guard the public credit against the calamity which a bad year of revenue might suddenly inflict. The line of duty was strictly compatible with the best interests of the country; for it was demonstrable, that the question of relief which the proposition of the Honourable Member for Essex would afford, would not be such as any individual would be conscious of, and therefore would not carry with it any consolation for an infraction of those principles, the maintenance of which the public credit demanded. He would inquire, first, if the country was in a state, with reference to its revenue, its expenditure, and its obligations to

the public creditor, to render the remission of any tax allowable? secondly, if the remission of any tax was allowable, whether this was the description of tax which Parliament in its wisdom would first select for remission? and thirdly, whether there was any thing in the information on the table as to the working of this tax, which countenanced the supposition, that there were strong motives with reference to the particular interest said to be affected, for the repeal of this tax? In the first place, the House would go along with him in the opinion, that nothing could be more inconsistent with financial wisdom than to lay a tax one moment and to repeal it the next, without some broad and intelligible principle of action. The tax in question was laid on, not inconsiderately, but in support of a system founded on a general principle. As to its bearing on the agriculture of the country, he should be glad to know what were the facts which rendered it reasonable to suppose that it had so narrowed the market for barley as to occasion any diminution of consumption? For, if there had been no diminution of consumption, then he was sure the Hon. Member for Essex would allow that agriculture had not suffered; because, if there had been no diminution of consumption, it was evident that the tax had fallen on the consumer, and not on the agriculturist. Now what were the facts? The average quantity of malt made for the thirty years preceding the last, was 4,300,000 quarters; the quantity made last year exceeded that amount by 600,000 or 700,000 quarters. It exceeded the average of the four years

immediately preceding, two of which were exempt from this tax. It was clear, therefore, that in no way had the consumption been lessened. If the consumption had not been reduced, it would be only the consumer who had suffered; but when did the Honourable Member find that the consumer had suffered so much from the tax as to be entitled to relief? There was no reason to believe that if the tax were taken off the consumer would benefit. So far from the consumer's having suffered from the tax, the fact was, that since the imposition of the tax in 1819, the price of porter had been twice reduced, once in September (it having been laid on in June), 1819, and another time in the year 1820. The Tax, therefore, had afforded a resource to the Exchequer, without causing any increase of price to the consumer, but the contrary. Let the House look to what would be the consequence of taking off the Tax. Would the Honourable Member for Essex, if the Tax were taken off to-morrow, guarantee the country that it must not be imposed again ere the lapse of two years? But, supposing it to be taken off, the relief to the consumer would be three farthings a gallon of porter.—How would it be possible to apportion that relief, so that the consumer should be rendered sensible of it when he was drinking his pint of porter? It was clear to demonstration, therefore, that if the tax were taken off to-morrow, although the Treasury would suffer the loss of more than a million and a half, the consumer would not experience an iota of relief. Looking at the experience of the last 30 thirty years, the House

would not find that the consumption of Malt was so much regulated by the duty upon it, as by the state of the season, and other external circumstances. In 1816, when the duty was 4s. 4d. the consumption was twenty-six millions of quarters. In 1817, when the duty was only 2s. 7d., the consumption fell to seventeen millions of quarters. In 1821, when the duty was raised to 3s. 6d. the consumption was 24,600,000 quarters. He felt, therefore, that he had demonstrated that never had the agricultural interest less reason to wish for the repeal of any tax, than for the repeal of this. He resisted it therefore in justice to the landed interest.—He resisted it for the love he bore the landed interest [a laugh]. Gentlemen might laugh, but if there was any one interest in the country, in favour of which he ought to feel any personal bias, it certainly was the landed interest. He was convinced, however, that it would be a great misfortune to the landed interest to incur the reproach of breaking down the finances of the country, without the production of any benefit to itself; for if he had succeeded in making himself understood, it was evident that no class in the country had less interest in urging the repeal of the tax in question than the agricultural class. But further, if before making any progress in reducing the national debt, if, before fulfilling the solemn covenant made with the country in 1819, the House, consistently with its duty to the public, could remit any taxes, this was not the tax which ought to be remitted. The Member for Abingdon had moved the repeal of the Window Tax, which

was negatived. If, however, the country could afford to spare a million and a half, it would be much better to repeal the Window Tax than the Malt Duty. But there were other taxes, operating severely on the lower orders, which ought to be taken off, if any tax could be taken off, in preference either to the Malt Duty or to the Window Tax. There was the Shop Tax, for instance, and others of a similar description, the remission of which ought to precede the remission of the Malt Duty, or the Window Tax. He protested, however, against the practise of calling on the House, night after night, to take off this tax or that tax, thereby creating a fallacious notion that the finances of the country were in a condition which would admit of any remission which could confer any solid benefit. He presumed that those who advocated the repeal of taxation, would not press their argument further than to remit the amount of the surplus balance between the revenue and the expenditure. But did they suppose that a remission of two millions and a half would operate on the community with an advantage equal to the injury resulting from the shock that such a proceeding would give to our finances and credit? As to the third branch of the question, that had already been so distinctly stated in the Resolution of 1819, which had been read by the Clerk, that it was quite unnecessary for him to enforce it; for he was sure the Honourable Member for Essex would not state that any thing had occurred since 1819 which rendered no longer expedient that which Parliament had then pronounced to be expedient.—Certainly he was perfectly aware that there had been a considerable pressure on the agricultural

interest since that period; but then he was aware that we were too much in the habit of generalizing, and exaggerating, and colouring our statements of distress. In parts of the country there was certainly distress, but the picture of the condition of those parts was exhibited as the faithful representation of the whole. It was to hold out a false expectation to the farmer to tell him that he would be greatly relieved by a remission of taxation. In the general expenditure of the farmer, taxation was a very small part. If the whole taxation of the farmer were withdrawn, he would scarcely be sensible of the relief. It was not, therefore, the part of an enlightened individual to come and say, that because the House of Commons did not repeal this tax or that tax, the agricultural interest was unnecessarily pressed upon. The agricultural interest ought rather to be taught to look for relief from that general working of events which he (Lord Castlereagh) trusted would, ere long, as it had done in former cases, lead to a return of prosperity. After recapitulating his various arguments against the repeal of the Tax, the Noble Lord begged to call the attention of the House to the circumstances under which that particular Tax was imposed. Long before the period of its imposition, his Majesty's Ministers had been reproached with suffering the finances of the country to float on from year to year; at some times, indeed, his Right Honourable Friend being compelled to confess, that the Revenue was not equal to the Expenditure, and to resort to loans and other proceedings of that nature to supply the deficiency. It was said, that for the sake of preserving their own

situations, Ministers postponed from time to time the evil days when all this should be placed on a permanent basis.—Whether they (Ministers) were right or wrong in having acted thus, was not now the question; but they felt that they could not call for additional Taxes from the people, until they saw what reductions could be made in the expenditure of the country. There was in the expenditure of this year, a reduction of a million and a half as compared with last year, and his Majesty's Ministers were at this moment occupied in considering what further reductions could be made.—(Hear, hear!) Ministers were at the same time anxious to avoid acting upon a false principle of economy—a principle, which, if introduced, would bring the country to a state of dilapidation and decay from which it could not easily recover (hear!). They had therefore reserved themselves until they received the Report of the Finance Committee, which would enable them to judge of the scale of taxation which ought to be proposed. If Ministers had proposed any measure before that Report, Gentlemen on the other side would have a right to refuse the imposition of a tax before a fair and reasonable ground of its necessity was established (hear, hear!). This was the cause which prevented Ministers from having introduced at an earlier period a permanent system of finance. But in 1819, the House had, after mature deliberation, voted 3 millions of additional taxes, because those taxes were considered necessary to carry on the Government of the country. He would put it to the Honourable Member for Essex (Mr.

Western), whether it would contribute to the welfare of the country at home or abroad, after continuing this tax for two years, to declare that such was the state of bankruptcy to which we were reduced, that we felt it necessary to retrace our steps; and in spite of the interest which we owed to the public creditor, to abandon that tax which had been solemnly agreed to so short a time ago by Parliament (hear, hear!)? Was the House ready to state in the face of Europe, that the situation of the country was such as to oblige us to repeal a million and half of taxes though those taxes were absolutely necessary to the State? Did the Hon. Member for Essex see the panic which would be created in the mind of the Fundholder, by thus abandoning the pledge of public faith which had been given, and leaving his interests to be provided for as they could by new loans (hear, hear!)? He had no hesitation in saying, that the proposed measure would operate, not as a practical relief, but as a practical pressure upon this country; it would shake the principle upon which our public credit had been supported. In looking to this question, Parliament ought to put Government out of the question. This was a question, not between the House and the Government, but between the House and the country—and he felt confident that the House would so decide upon it; that they would look to it in an enlightened point of view; that they would, in a word, consider and decide upon it solely as it bore upon the true interests of the country (hear, hear!). For himself he was free to say, that he could not think of advising so hazardous and degrading

a measure; he could not think of advising a measure which involved us in difficulty in time of peace, and which would prevent us from holding that high and lofty situation which belonged to us in time of war.—*He should be sorry to administer the Government of the country, if the wisdom of Parliament should decide against the continuance of this Tax.* He could call the present motion no other than a suicidal measure—a measure fraught with every evil. There was no man more anxious than he was to support the Agricultural Interests of the country; but he felt that he should best discharge his duty to the country generally, and also to the Agricultural Interests in particular, by refusing his assent to a motion, the effect of which would be to shake the public credit, without producing one particle of relief to those whose distresses it professed to remedy (cheers, “question, question!”).

Mr. COKE (of Norfolk) addressed the House, amidst loud and repeated cries of “Question.” The Honourable Member, after some observations, which could not from the noise be distinctly heard in the Gallery, remarked, that complaints of the distresses of the country came with an ill grace from Gentlemen who gave their undivided support to those Ministers whose measures had been the sole cause of the poverty and misery under which all classes of society at this moment laboured (hear, hear!). He attributed those evils to the system of Mr. Pitt, and he felt that no permanent relief could be afforded without a change of system (hear!). In 1816 and 1817, complaints were made that barley was

reduced to 18s. per quarter. He then moved the repeal of the War Malt Tax, which was carried. Barley rose to a remunerating price; and from that period no complaint was heard from the landholder, until the shifts and blunders of the Chancellor of the Exchequer caused him to stumble upon the present tax (hear, and a laugh). The Hon. Member concluded by supporting the motion—(question, question!—withdraw, withdraw!).

Lord A HAMILTON rose amidst loud cries of "Question, Question!" The Noble Lord, as soon as he could obtain a hearing, observed, that after the reception which he had met with, he could not presume to trespass at any length upon the time of the House.—He felt, however, that if he allowed this question to pass without a few observations, he should feel himself less competent to account to his constituents for his silence, than to the House for his intrusion (hear, hear!). The Noble Lord proceeded to answer the several arguments urged in opposition to the motion, and in the course of his speech noticed the circumstance of a Noble Friend of his (the Earl of Fife we believe), who had been removed from an office in the Royal Household shortly after he had given his vote in favour of this measure (hear, hear!). The Noble Lord (Castlereagh) had expressed his disinclination to conduct the affairs of Government after the passing of the present motion; but no one who recollected the repeated defeats of the Noble Lord upon the Income Tax, and upon several other occasions, could entertain a fear of his (Lord Castlereagh's) vacating his seat upon the present occasion. Adverting again to

the removal of the Earl of Fife, the Noble Lord observed, that the removal of the Noble Earl was highly creditable to him as a man of honour; he had acted in conformity with his own feelings, and also according to the dictates, if not the actual instructions of his (Lord Fife's) constituents (hear, hear!). He felt it necessary to say so much in favour of his Noble Friend, whose manly and independent conduct was highly honourable both to his head and to his heart (hear, hear, hear.) He hoped that the case of his Noble Friend (the Earl of Fife) would be a warning to other Honourable Members—that it would evince to them that there were certain situations, however honourable in any other point of view, which could not be held consistently with an independent vote in that House (hear, hear!). The Noble Lord concluded by supporting the motion (loud cries of "question, question," "Lord Fife, Lord Fife!")

The Earl of FIFE rose amidst loud cheers. He said that from what had been said by the Noble Lord, who had preceded him, he felt it necessary to make a few observations. He was not at all ambitious of engaging the attention of the House upon any occasion, but more particularly upon a subject like the present (hear!). Upon such a subject it would be more congenial to his feelings to remain silent; but there were occasions when silence was impossible. He had no hesitation in saying, that the mode which had been adopted with respect to the place he had held in the Royal Family was not necessary, unless from some motive which he did not then feel it proper to mention (hear!). With respect

to him it was totally unnecessary, because he had some time ago announced the impossibility of his being able to discharge the duties of that office, and that duty alone prevented him from at once relinquishing a place which he had accepted under peculiar circumstances (hear, hear !). He must say, that the period of his removal was not by any means a suitable one. He had received orders to attend his Majesty (as we understood) to Ireland, and, in a very short time after, he was removed, for no other reason than that of having voted in that House according to the dictates of his conscience (cheers), and with a view to the interests and wishes of his constituents. He had voted in a similar manner last year, from a feeling that the situation of the country obliged him to do so. This hasty and abrupt communication had been made to him (and he had it from authority) in consequence of the vote he had given in favour of this Bill, yet he must own that he did not repent that vote (cheers). He trusted that the statement which he had now made would operate as a caution to other Gentlemen in that House. He had heard it laid down, that resistance, if successful, was not held as a crime ; but, in this instance the case was different. He had last year voted in the minority against the Tax, without any observation being made upon it, but this year he had voted in the same way, but with a Majority, but that that was held to be a great crime (hear, hear, hear !). He must repeat, that he did not regret his vote in either case, and he hoped that he should be

own conscience, and in accordance with the interests and wishes of his Constituents (cheers !). He hoped also, that his loyalty to the Throne and to the person of his Majesty, to whose sacred person he had ever been attached, would remain unabated—that it should remain true as the dial to the sun, although that dial might not be always shone upon (hear, hear !). The Noble Earl, after several other observations, concluded by giving his support to the motion.

LORD FOLKESTONE rose amidst loud cries of question, and appealed to the House whether he had not a right to claim their attention for a few minutes in consequence of the allusions which had been made to him? Those allusions referred to an assertion which he had made on a former occasion, and which, as he had not advanced hastily, he did not mean to withdraw.—All the Gentlemen who had alluded to it, argued as if it was a matter of option with the country whether it would pay the interest of the debt or not. What he had stated was, that in the Government of countries there was a moral as well as physical impossibility which must excuse a breach of faith with the public creditor. He had put two cases in illustration of this, and he would defy those who had animadverted on him to expose the weakness of those cases, or deny in fair argument the inference which he had drawn from them. In one case he supposed the country threatened by foreign invasion, and unable to provide against it and pay the interest of the debt at the same time. Would it not, in such a situation of things, be a breach of faith to pay the interest, and neglect

the necessary defence? If his Honourable Friend maintained the contrary, he must be prepared to prove that apart was greater than the whole. He had stated another case, which was that of the taxation becoming so oppressive, as to produce disturbances, which called for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. If the liberties of the country were destroyed, he would ask, could the fundholders themselves be safe? This nation owed all its power and greatness to its liberties, and could only continue great and powerful while its liberties were preserved. This was all he had said on a former night, and he would still maintain that circumstances might exist which would render the withholding of the interest of the Public Debt not a fault but an act of duty. After some further observations upon the question itself, which were rendered inaudible by the cries of question, the Noble Lord concluded with expressing the satisfaction which he felt in voting for the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. WODEHOUSE said a few words in favour of the motion.

Mr. WESTERN replied.

The House then divided, as follows:—

For the motion	- - - -	144
Against it	- - - -	242
Majority	- - - -	—98

STOCKING-WEAVERS.

I am compelled to put off what I intended on the subject of the Stocking Weavers' complaints till next week. —I have carefully read the pamphlet, entitled, "*the Question at Issue.*" That pamphlet contains erroneous views; and, as those errors, like all others, tend to produce harm, I shall endeavour to correct them.

COBBETT'S RELIGIOUS TRACTS.

This is a monthly publication, price 3d.—The first Number was published on the *first of March*, entitled, "*Naboth's Vineyard; or God's vengeance against hypocrisy and cruelty.*" The second, on the *first of April*, entitled, "*The Sin of Drunkenness, in Kings, Priests and People.*"—If I am to judge from the sale of these little productions, the *Tract Society* may begin to look about them; for, certainly, *cant* and *rant* never can long flourish where *common sense* is so well received.—A *canter* has written me a most abusive letter; and I hear of two *ranters*, who have *cursed me* in their pulpit ravings. In the language of "the man after God's own heart," I say, "*let them curse on.*"